



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

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# News Release

## **ICE LAUNCHES OPERATION COMMUNITY SHIELD, ARRESTS 103 MS-13 GANG MEMBERS IN SIX MAJOR U.S. CITIES** *One MS-13 Member Arrested in Indianapolis as part of New National Crackdown*

INDIANAPOLIS – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) today announced the arrest of 103 members of the violent street gang Mara Salvatrucha 13 (MS-13) across the nation as part of a new anti-gang initiative called “Operation Community Shield.”

Late last month, teams of ICE agents working with their federal, state, and local counterparts in the Washington, D.C., Baltimore, New York, Newark, Los Angeles, and Miami metropolitan areas, began arresting MS-13 gang members on a range of criminal and /or administrative charges. One arrest was also made in the Dallas metro area.

While Operation Community Shield began in the six cities mentioned, ICE assisted in the arrest of one MS-13 gang member in Indianapolis March 1. Noblesville police, ICE agents and the Safe Streets Task Force arrested Juan Jose Vasquez-Flamenco, 18, without incident at his mother’s residence on Moreland Court. Vasquez-Flamenco, an illegal alien from El Salvador, is currently in custody at Marion County Jail where he faces charges on an outstanding criminal gang activity warrant. Vasquez-Flamenco also faces charges of home invasion, criminal confinement, robbery, burglary and gang activity in Noblesville, Ind. Vasquez-Flamenco will be turned over to ICE custody for deportation after serving any awarded prison sentence.

The 103 individuals arrested to date are accused of, or have already been convicted for, a wide variety of crimes that include murder, attempted murder, sodomy, assault, narcotics violations, weapons possession, re-entering the United States after deportation, and being in the United States illegally.



Juan Jose Vasquez-Flamenco



MS-13 tattoo

“These gang members are a menace to society and we are working closely with local law enforcement to apprehend these individuals,” said Michelle Mangold, resident agent-in-charge of ICE Investigations in Indianapolis.

Operation Community Shield is a nationwide ICE anti-gang initiative designed to disrupt, dismantle, and prosecute violent gang members and their organizations by employing the full range of authorities and investigative tools available to ICE. Under this initiative, ICE is employing its broad immigration authorities (both criminal and administrative) against gang members, as well as its customs authorities in targeting narcotics smuggling, money laundering, and in seeking the forfeiture of assets.

This initiative also involves strong partnerships and cooperation with existing federal, state, and local anti-gang efforts. Such partnerships are essential to the success of the initiative and to ensure officer safety during operations.

ICE will also be working through its 54 Attaché offices overseas to cooperate with foreign governments that are also experiencing gang problems, particularly those in Central America.

The initial target of Operation Community Shield is MS-13, which is one of the largest and most violent street gangs in the United States. The majority of MS-13 members are foreign nationals in this country illegally, making them subject to ICE’s criminal and administrative immigration authorities. ICE plans to use these immigration tools to arrest, prosecute, and where appropriate, remove these individuals from the United States. ICE coordinates all deportations with the foreign nations receiving these individuals.

At the same time, many MS-13 members derive income from the sale of illegal drugs and other contraband, making them subject to ICE’s counter-drug, financial, and other investigative authorities. Seizure and forfeiture of funds, property, and other illegally derived assets will be another component of the initiative.

Over the coming months, ICE will be using all these tools in a combined fashion with the ultimate goal of crippling MS-13 organizations across the country. Ultimately, Operation Community Shield will also target other violent street gangs.

**#ICE#**

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities*